

CASE STUDY: Marymoor Park Concert Series

Location:	Marymoor Park, Redmond, King County, WA
Event:	Marymoor Park Concert Series
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Background

In 2007, King County Solid Waste Division partnered with the King County Parks Department to start recycling traditional items and composting food at their summer concert series. The Solid Waste Division funded consultant assistance (Sam Wilder through Sound Resource Management Group, Inc.) and printed materials to help get recycling and composting started. Parks Department paid for the collection service.

The consultant helped with set up prior to the concert series. Parks staff and the consultant met with Waste Management, the contracted hauler, to determine collection container needs. Waste Management worked with Parks to determine an efficient container delivery and container pick up schedule.

The consultant provided information regarding Cedar Grove Composting approved biodegradable utensils, plates and cups to be given to vendors. Vendors received a letter and this listing prior to the concert series. Vendors had the option to use biodegradable materials or not. All but a few vendors voluntarily used biodegradable products.

The Master Composter Recycling Program agreed to provide volunteers to help monitor recycling/composting/garbage stations inside the concert venue during all 13 concerts. Volunteers were needed since recycling was set up to service both vendors and concert participants. Prior to the concerts, volunteers attended a training conducted by Parks staff and the consultant.

Recycling Activities

Sixty-four gallon or 96 gallon carts were placed behind vendor booths and at "stations" (photo 1) in the food vendor area. Five stations were set up to be monitored by a Master Recycler Composter volunteer. Each station contained one or two compost carts with a biodegradable liner, two carts for recyclables and one or two 32-gallon cans for garbage. Later in the season, a large frame was added by Parks staff (photo 2).

Volunteers arrived prior to each concert and stood by a station during the whole concert. Volunteers were rotated so they were not at one location too long. Since some vendors used biodegradable items and some did not - this monitoring was crucial. It was very difficult for people to determine which cups

were made from plastic and which were made from corn. Volunteers were available to help concert goers make this determination, but it is recommended that all vendors be required to use compostable cups to eliminate confusion. Volunteers were also able to answer questions about food recycling at home, too.

At the end of each concert, Parks staff would send one staff member to collect biodegradable cups while other staff members collected loose/littered garbage. These biodegradable beer cups were then composted. Parks staff recorded levels of compost and recycling at the end of each concert. The consultant weighed carts of food waste at a few of the concerts.



Photo 1



Photo 2

Results

Attendance: 39,485 (total from 12 concerts; average attendance per concert: 3,290)

Total Food Waste Volume (cubic yards): 59.32

Total Recyclables Volume: 44.45

Total Garbage Volume: 102.9

Total Waste Volume: 206.67

Total Recycled Waste: 103.77

Recycling Rate: 50%

Recommendations for Future Concerts

- **Staffed Stations:** Utilize a similar set up with staffed stations for each concert. Sorting recycling from composting from garbage is still new to people and having staffed stations helps people determine what can go where. Having MRCs also helped to clarify why the “clear cups” that were used were compostable and not garbage. Since they look just like plastic cups, without this explanation, people may have thought that plastic cups could go in their yard waste container at home. Volunteers explained that these were special cups made from corn.
- **Friendly Staffing:** Recruit volunteers or staff for monitoring that educate the public in a friendly way about what is and is not recyclable. It is important to remember people are at a concert to have fun and hear good music. Although

this is a great opportunity to educate people on what is and is not recyclable- it is a secondary item for concert goers. To ensure that people have a positive association with this experience it is really important that people do not feel that they are being scolded for not knowing what is and is not recyclable.

- **Compostable Plates, Cups, Utensils:** This year it was very hard to determine what is and is not compostable. It is recommended that vendors be required to utilize all Cedar Grove approved plates, cups, straws, lids, napkins and utensils. This could be included in their vendor agreement.
- **Compostable Beer Cups:** Using compostable cups for beer made a huge impact in the waste stream. The majority of composted material were beer cups.
- **Vendor Letters with Compostable Options:** These letters should be mailed earlier to ensure that vendors have plenty of time to purchase compostable materials.
- **Promotion:** To promote this program, it would be great to have it shown on the King County Parks website advertising the concerts; the Mountain radio website; and the promoter's website.
- **Signs for Vendor Booths:** Small signs were used, but larger signs advertising that utensils, plates or cups are compostable would be helpful to display at vendor booths. Sandwich board signs could also be used to reach people that are in line waiting to purchase food.
- **Bulk condiments:** One issue was that condiments were served in small plastic containers that were not compostable but would often be in compostable container clamshells. If bulk dispensers were used it would eliminate the need for these small plastic containers.
- **Announcements Regarding Recycling:** A small announcement or taped message before the show or during intermission reminding people to recycle would be very helpful. Banners or posters could also be used to advertise compostable product use and that people should recycle or compost.
- **Garbage Cans:** Some Parks staff wanted to leave additional garbage cans in the food area near tables, that were not grouped with recycling and composting carts. At the first few concerts some concert goers commented that they did not know there was recycling and dumped all their material in the garbage can near their container. They said they would have been willing to walk to a recycling bin. It is recommended that these cans be removed for next year- leaving only 5 stations for compost/recycling/garbage to ensure that people use the options to compost or recycle.
- **Sorting Help At the End of the Concert:** At the beginning of the series, park staff "swept through" the concert area collecting garbage. One person collected only biodegradable cups so they could be composted. At the end of the series, volunteers helped with this because there were not many staff to perform this. This is a crucial time for collecting recyclables and compostables - and needs to be staffed.